

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 130950Z FEB 76 ZFF 5 RUHQHQA

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9694

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMBAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 0782

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJ: INCREASED CONCERN VOICED OVER FAGEKKA

1. DACCA PRESS FEBRUARY 12 CARRIES LENGTHY "INTERVIEW" BY B.M. ABBAS, ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT ON FLOOD CONTROL, IRRIGATION AND POWER IN WHICH ABBAS, WHO HAS BEEN THE KEY TECHNICAL NEGOTIATOR FOR BANGLADESH ON THE FARAKKA BARRAGE ISSUE, DENOUNCES INDIAN FOR THE "ADVERSE EFFECTS ON RIVER AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN BANGLADESH RESULTING FROM WITHDRAWAL OF GANGES WATER AT FARAKKA." THE ACCOUNT OF THE INTERVIEW FURTHER STATES THAT "BANGLADESH HAS OFFICIALLY DRAWN THE ATTENTION OF...INDIA" TO THIS DEVELOPMENT.

2. THE INTERVIEW BY ABBAS, LATEST IN THE SERIES OF BANGALEE ALLEGATIONS OF INDIAN HOSTILITY AN CALLOUSNESS, MAKES TWO PRIMARY CHARGES:

A) UNDER THE TERMS OF THE INDO-BANGALEE AGREEMENT REACHED LAST APRIL WHICH PERMITTED SPECIFIED QUANTITIES OF WATER TO BE WITHDRAWN AT FARAKKA OVER FORTY DASV (APRIL
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21-MAY 31) AS A TEST DURING LAST YEAR'S "LEAN PERIOD" (SEE DACCA 1971/1975), ABBAS ASSERTS THAT ANY WITHDRAWAL AFTER THE TEST PERIOD "SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF PRIOR CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN/...BANGLADESH AND

INDIA."

B) WHILE THE AGREEMENT SPECIFIED THAT JOINT INDO-BANGALEE TEAMS OF EXPERTS WOULD BE LOCATED AT APPROPRIATE PLACES IN BOTH COUNTRIES TO CHECK THE EFFECT OF THE WITHDRAWALS AND ALSO AT THE BARRAGE ITSELF "TO RECORD THIS DISCHARGES INTO THE FEEDER CANAL AND THE REMAINING FLOWS FOR BANGLADESH," ABBAS CONTENDS THAT WHEN BANGLADESH REQUESTED THAT BANGALEE TEAM AT THE BARRAGE BE PERMITTED TO REMAIN IN PLACE AFTER THE TEST PERIOD, INDIA REFUSED THIS PROPOSAL. THUS, BANGLADESH HAS NO RPT NO RELIABLE INFORMATION ON THE AMOUNT OF WATER WHICH HAS BEEN RELEASED BELOW FARAKKA TO BANGLADESH SINCE MAY 31, 1975. ACCORDING TO THE ACCOUNTS OF THE INTERVIEW, ABBAS WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT IS CLEAR TO BANGLADESH THAT "LARGE QUANTITIES OF WATER ARE BEING WITHDRAWN FROM THE GANGES UPSTREAM IN INDIA."

3. WHILE ABBAS'S CONTENTION REGARDING THE STATIONING OF BANGALEE OBSERVERS AT FARAKKA AFTER MAY 31 SERVES LITTLE PURPOSE OTHER THAN TO LEAVE THE INDIANS OPEN TO BEING CONSIDERED CALLOUS, HIS ASSERTION THAT THE AGREEMENT OF LAST APRIL PROHIBITED ANY WITHDRAWALS BY CONSULTATIONS HAS MERIT. ACCORDING TO THE JOINT PRESS RELEASE DESCRIBING THE AGREEMENT, THE INDIANS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WHILE THE TWO SIDES AGREED THAT IT WAS "ESSENTIAL TO RUN THE FEEDER CANAL" DURING THE "CURRENT" (1975) LEAN PERIOD, "DISCUSSIONS REGARDING ALLOCATION OF FAIR WEATHER FLOWS OF THE GANGA DURING LEAN MONTHS IN TERMS OF THE...DECLARATION OF MAY, 1974 BY PRIME MINISTERS GANDHI AND MUJIBUR RAHMAN ARE CONTINUING". THE 1974 DECLARATION (AS REPORTED IN NEW 6732/1974) STATES THAT THE PRIME MINISTERS "EXPRESSED THEIR DETERMINATION THAT BEFORE THE FARAKKA BARRAGE IS COMMISSIONED THEY WOULD ARRIVE AT A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ALLOCATION OF THE WATER AVAILABLE DURING PERIODS OF MINIMUM FLOW IN THE GANGA." THE 1975 AGREEMENT WAS FOR A SPECIFIED TERM WITHIN LAST YEAR'S "LEAN SEASON" AND WE ARE AWARE OF NO RPT NO ASSERTION FROM ANY QUARTER THAT IT WAS INTENDED TO SERVE AS THE "MUTUALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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ACCEPTABLE ALLOCATION" CONTEMPLATED IN THE 1974 DECLARATION, WHICH WAS TO BE THE CONDITION TO BE FULFILLED BEFORE THE BARRAGE WAS BROUGHT INTO OPERATION.

4. WHATEVER THE LEGAL POSITION MAY BE, THE BANGALEES ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER WHAT THEY CONCLUDE IS THE DECIDEDLY ADVERSE EFFECT OF THE FARAKKA BARRAGE. NOT ONLY HAS DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR COMMODORE KHAN VOICED HIS WORRY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS (DACCA 0691 AND A-12). BUT WE HEAR INCREASINGLY FROM A WIDE SPECTRUM OF BANGALEES ABOUT THE UNUSUALLY LOW WATER IN THE GANGA. ABBAS IN HIS PRESS INTERVIEW GAVE CONSIDERABLE SUBSTANCE TO THIS VIEW WHEN HE NOTED THAT THE RIVER LEVEL AT HARDINGE BRIDGE IN

DECEMBER, 1975 WAS 25-27 FEET AS COMPARED TO 28-30 FEET A
YEAR PREVIOUS AND IT WAS 21-23 FEET LAST MONTH AS COMPARED
TO 27-28 FEET IN JANUARY, 1975. THE FLOW, HE SAID, WAS
100,000 CUSECS AT THE END OF DECEMBER, 1975 AS AGAINST
THE "USUAL" 130,000 AT THE END OF OTHER DECEMBERS, AND WAS
54,000 CUSECS AT THE END OF LAST MONTH IN CONTRAST TO
THE NORMAL 65,000 CUSECS AT THE END OF JANUARY IN OTHER
YEARS.
BOSTER

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